DC

12

The Joker™

THE MAN WHO STOPPED LAUGHING

ROSENBERG
DI GIANDOMENICO
FAJARDO JR.

15+
TEEN PLUS

BATWOMAN AND LUKE FOX UNCOVER THE DEEPEST, DARKEST SECRETS OF THE MULTIVERSE!

OUTSIDERS

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Written by
JACKSON LANZING
AND COLLIN KELLY

Art by
ROBERT CAREY

Variant cover by CHRISTIAN WARD

A NEW
ONGOING SERIES

NOVEMBER

CJW

MIDTOWN.

A man has been feeling really tired for a long time. His doctor runs some tests and says they'll get him all fixed up as soon as the results are back.

THERE YA GO.

WHAT CAN I GET FOR YA, BUDDY?

Matthew Rosenberg WRITER
Carmine Di Giandomenico ARTIST

Days go by and the man finally calls the doctor. "Doc, do you have my test results yet? The anticipation has been killing me."

HELLO. I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.

YOU- YOU'RE *HIM!*

Romulo Fajardo Jr. COLORIST
Tom Napolitano LETTERER
Ben Abernathy EDITOR

The doctor replies, "Actually, that's the colon cancer."

TAKE ALL MY MONEY! JUST PLEASE DON'T HURT ME.

I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM...

I JUST WANTED SOME HOT DOGS...

Carmine Di Giandomenico COVER
Christian Ward and Otto Schmidt VARIANT COVERS
Ben Oliver 1:25 VARIANT COVER

I told you all the best jokes rely on the audience's anticipation.

I GOT LUNCH.

IT WAS FREE, SOLOMON, SO I GOT YOU FIFTEEN...

...ALTHOUGH I'M STILL NOT SURE IF YOU EAT.

THE HOT DOG MAN WAS SCARED OF ME. HE THOUGHT I WAS ACTUALLY THE JOKER.

I'M SORRY. THAT MUST HAVE MADE YOU FEEL--

I WAS THINKING, MAYBE HE'S RIGHT. MAYBE I ***AM*** THE JOKER.

YOU'RE NOT.

RIGHT. BUT MAYBE--

NO.

BUT JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT HIM DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T DO FUN STUFF.

WHAT A BRILLIANT POINT, MY LITTLE DISEASED SIDEKICK.

Promise the inevitable, but deliver the unexpected.

Wait...maybe that's revenge.

FAKE JOKER IS RUNNING OUT OF FRIENDS.

AND I HAVE JUST THE PERFECT FUN IDEA. BUT I AM GOING TO NEED ANOTHER FRIEND TO HELP ME PULL IT OFF.

RUDE... BUT TRUE.

BUT I STILL HAVE ONE FRIEND LEFT. AND THEY OWE ME A FAVOR.

APARO PARK.

Either way, as our story comes to its inevitable end, like an out-of- control freight train...

HELLO, JASON.

YOU LOOK POORLY.

YOU'RE A DIFFICULT MAN TO FIND.

BUT NOT DIFFICULT ENOUGH.

NO! IT'S YOU!

PEOPLE KEEP SAYING THAT. BUT NO, IT'S NOT.

STAY AWAY FROM ME!

STILL SKITTISH, I SEE. MY POOR LITTLE VIGILANTE. WHAT *DID* HE DO TO YOU?

PLEASE! JUST LET ME GO.

...we have to decide whether to give the audience laughter or slaughter.

I CAN'T STAND TO SEE YOU LIKE THIS.

MEAN OLD BATMAN MUCKED AROUND IN YOUR LITTLE HEAD AND MADE YOU SO SCARED OF EVERYTYHING.*

BUT DON'T WORRY.

I CAME TO TEST OUT MY NEW PROJECT AND FIX YOU AT THE SAME TIME...

*AS SEEN IN *THE GOTHAM WAR!* -BEN

NOW YOU WON'T BE SCARED ANYMORE.

WELL, YOU MIGHT STILL BE SCARED. BUT YOU'LL THINK THAT'S FUNNY.

HEH HEH.

WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME?!

I GAVE YOU THE TEENSIEST, TINIEST DOSE OF JOKER TOXIN. SO SMALL.

JUST ENOUGH TO BRING BACK THAT PSYCHOTIC ALTER EGO OF YOURS, I HOPE.

FIRST OF ALL, THE EFFECTS WILL LEVEL OUT IN TIME, DON'T WORRY.

YOU WON'T STAY THIS FUN FOREVER.

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!

WELL, THAT'S A BIT COMPLICATED.

I THOUGHT WE COULD HELP EACH OTHER.

HA! WHY WOULD I HELP YOU?

BECAUSE I AM GOING TO GIVE YOU WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED.

I'LL LET YOU KILL THE JOKER.

AHA HA!

I SEE BY YOUR GRIN THAT YOU'RE A BIT CONFUSED.

BECAUSE YOU THINK *I* AM ***HIM.***

IN A SHOCKING TWIST FOR ALL INVOLVED, IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THAT I AM NOT.

I AM JUST ANOTHER SAD VICTIM OF HIS MADNESS. AND I WANT MY REVENGE... JUST LIKE ***YOU.***

YOU WANT ME TO WORK WITH YOU?

YES.

BUT YOU'RE STILL A DELUSIONAL, MURDEROUS MANIAC.

WHICH IS WHY I THINK WE'D REALLY HIT IT OFF.

WHAT'S WITH THE KID?

ALBERT? HE'S MY MAKE-A-WISH ***ROBIN.***

I'M NOT DOING ANYTHING THAT PUTS A KID IN DANGER.

I SEE. YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE THIS TINY GENTLEMAN VERY SAD, BUT PRINCIPLES ARE OH SO IMPORTANT.

PERHAPS WE CAN FIND A WAY TO KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE ***STONE...***

18 MILES NORTH OF GOTHAM

EVEN IF THIS DOESN'T WORK, IT'S STILL A FUN GIG.

IT'LL WORK.

HE'LL DO ANYTHING TO MAKE SURE **THE RED HOOD** ISN'T OUT HERE DOING THIS STUFF ANYMORE.

FIRST TIME I'VE EVER TRIED TO RUN INTO THIS GUY IN MY LIFE AND I CAN'T FIND HIM.

NEVER MIND. HE'S HERE.

HOLY @#!$, HE'S FAST. I'M DOING 120.

JUST MAKE SURE YOU MAKE IT BACK TO THE SAFE HOUSE.

I KNOW, I KNOW. ALMOST THERE. NOT SURE THE BIKE IS GOING TO MAKE IT.

I GOT OTHERS.

I ALMOST GOT BLOWN UP FOR YOU. NOW THIS.

WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER, YOU OWE ME. ***BIG-TIME.***

RED HOOD...WE NEED TO TALK.

HIYA. SORRY ABOUT THAT WHOLE CHASE. JASON SAID YOU'D KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THIS KID HERE.

PLEASE DON'T KICK MY ASS.

WHERE IS HE?

35 MILES SOUTH OF GOTHAM.

NEXT STOP--GOTHAM CITY!

MR. JOKER, SIR--

I TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME THAT.

RIGHT, SORRY, BOSS. I WAS JUST WONDERIN', DOES THE RED HOOD GUY KNOW ABOUT YOU PLANNING TO BLOW UP GOTHAM AND ALL?

I MAY HAVE LEFT OUT SOME DETAILS, BUT IT'LL BE FINE.

AND WE'RE SURE THE OTHER GUY, THE ***REAL*** JOKER, IS GONNA COME?

I LEFT HIM CLUES HE CAN'T MISS.

YEAH. BUT WHAT IF HE DOES?

THEN I GUESS WE'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE OUR OWN FUN, WON'T WE?

BOSS...

I THINK HE FOUND US.

WELL PLAYED, REAL ME. WELL PLAYED.

HE HAS STYLE. YOU HAVE TO GIVE HIM THAT.

SHOOT DOWN THAT DIRIGIBLE!

LINES ARE AS SECURED AS THEY'RE GONNA GET.

COME ON DOWN, CLOWN.

GRAAAH!

HOLY CRAP! THEY GOT ANOTHER GORILLA.

AlllEEEE!

WHERE DOES HE KEEP GETTING GORILLAS?! KILLER MOTH, PLEASE KILL IT.

AREN'T THEY AN ENDANGERED SPECIES? I'M NOT GONNA DO THAT.

I REALLY AM GOING TO MISS THIS FAKE ME.

MR. J-- BOSS! THEY'RE ON THE TRAIN.

DON'T WORRY. NOW THAT THAT PESKY BAT IS DISTRACTED, MY BACKUP WILL BE HERE ANY MINUTE. IN FACT...

"...I THINK HE JUST GOT HERE."

HONEY, I'M HOME!

SO GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT. IT'S BEEN TOO LONG.

YOU MEAN SINCE I SHOT YOU IN THE HEAD? IT REALLY HAS.

HOW DID YOU REALLY THINK THIS WAS ALL GOING TO END?

WITH ONE OR TWO FEWER JOKERS.

BOSS, WATCH OUT. I CAN NAIL HIM!

NO! HE'S MINE!

THERE. NOW WE CAN DO THIS NICE AND SLOW. AND ALL FROM THE LUXURY OF THE RAIL. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A MORE ELEGANT WAY TO VIVISECT YOUR DOPPELGÄNGER.

I NEVER SHOULD HAVE MADE YOU.

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE MADE ***EITHER*** OF US.

AH, JASON, MY FRIEND. CLOWNS TO THE LEFT OF YOU, JOKERS TO THE RIGHT. AND HERE YOU ARE, STUCK IN--

SHUT UP. WHAT NOW?

WELL, I DIDN'T HAVE IT ALL PLANNED OUT, BUT I THOUGHT MAYBE... WE KILL HIM AND EAT HIM TO TAKE ALL HIS POWERS?

WHAT?!

YOU WORRIED HE'S GOING TO TASTE FUNNY?

WE NEED TO STOP THE TRAIN AND GO SOMEWHERE ISOLATED, SO WE CAN TAKE OUR TIME WITH HIM.

I'M NOT SURE IF I GET A VOTE, BUT I THINK I'D PREFER BEING EATEN.

THAT'S A WONDERFUL IDEA, JASON...

...ONLY WE DISMANTLED THE BRAKES AND SET THE THROTTLE TO FULL SPEED.

HOW WERE YOU PLANNING ON STOPPING?!

I WAS GOING TO LET GOTHAM CENTRAL STATION DO THAT FOR US.

WITH ALL THE TANKERS FULL OF TOXIC GAS IN THE BACK, IT WILL BE MESSY.

BUT WE WON'T REALLY BE AROUND TO WORRY ABOUT IT.

YOU'RE AS INSANE AS HE IS.

YES, THAT'S SORT OF THE POINT.

I'M NOT SURE I'D AGREE WITH THAT, BUT THAT FEELS LIKE A DEBATE FOR LATER.

BLAM BLAM

THIS IS REALLY BETWEEN A DERANGED CLOWN AND HIS STALKER.

BYE-BYE!

THANKS FOR THE HELP. ENJOY THE REST OF THE RIDE!

OPEN THE DOOR! WE HAD A DEAL!

QUICK THINKING WITH THE DOOR. WELL DONE.

NO, IT WAS ALL YOU WITH THAT LUNGE. I WAS ALMOST SCARED.

OH, STOP IT. IT'S JUST A GOOD THING YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO TIE A KNOT.

I'LL KILL YOU!

HA! NEVER!

GET ME TO THAT BLIMP!

GET OFF! I CAN'T CARRY THIS MUCH WEIGHT, YOU MANIAC!

THEN I GUESS THIS IS WHERE YOU GET OFF.

AAAH!

ACK! I GAVE YOU EVERYTHING. MY LOOKS. MY GOOD NAME. AND THIS WAS YOUR FINAL PLAN? A TRAIN CRASH? SO BANAL.

THE TRAIN IS FULL OF JOKER TOXIN. WHEN IT CRASHES IN THE HEART OF GOTHAM IT WILL TURN EVERYONE INTO YOU AND ME.

OH, THAT'S NOT BAD, ACTUALLY.

GAH! AND WHAT WAS YOUR BRILLIANT PLAN?

I WAS GOING TO BOMB THE CITY FROM A BLIMP IN THE HOPE THAT I'D HIT YOU EVENTUALLY. SIMPLE IS BEST.

SIMPLE BUT ELEGANT.

SO, HOW WERE YOU GOING TO GET OUT OF HERE?

I WASN'T.

I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.

I DID HAVE... AN EMERGENCY ESCAPE...JUST IN CASE...

I KNEW IT!

OH MY GOD! ARE YOU OKAY? THAT WAS WILD.

STOP THAT TRAIN.

HOW DO YOU WANT ME TO DO THAT? EVEN IF WE COULD BLOW UP THE TRACKS, IT'S ALL FULL OF GAS. THE CRASH'D STILL GAS THE CITY, RIGHT?

USELESS.

BATGIRL, DO YOU COPY?

STEPH, IF YOU'RE OUT THERE...PLEASE ANSWER.

JASON...

IT'S ME.

BATMAN? LOOK, THERE'S A SITUATION WITH THE TWO JOKERS--

I KNOW ABOUT IT. BUT **SOMEONE** THOUGHT IT WAS A GOOD IDEA TO LURE ME TO THE OTHER SIDE OF GOTHAM. WE'RE ALL MOVING AS FAST AS WE CAN TO GET THERE--

YEAH. UMM...I'M ON THE BLIMP.

I'M SO SORRY HE TOOK YOU JASON, BUT I'M ON MY WAY. DON'T WORRY--

NO ONE TOOK ME. I CAME HERE MYSELF. TO FINISH THIS.

REPEAT THAT.

LONG STORY. BUT THIS IS BAD. THE TRAIN IS FULL OF JOKER GAS. HE PLANS TO CRASH IT INTO THE HEART OF THE CITY. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO STOP THIS.

HOW FAR OUT ARE YOU?

THREE MILES FROM THE BOLLAND BRIDGE, GIVE OR TAKE. IS THERE SOMETHING I COULD DO TO MAKE THE GAS INERT?

THE GAS IS FLAMMABLE. BUT IN THE QUANTITIES HE MUST HAVE, SOME WILL ESCAPE AND THE PREVAILING WINDS WILL TAKE IT TO THE CITY. IT ALSO DISSOLVES IN WATER, BUT AGAIN, SAME PROBLEM.

WHAT ABOUT BOTH?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN...?

"JASON, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?"

HOW ABOUT THIS, AND I'M JUST SPITBALLING HERE, WHAT IF WE CALL THIS ONE A DRAW. THAT COULD BE FUN, RIGHT?

I'M LISTENING...

WE BOTH GET OUT OF HERE. AGREE TO GO OUR SEPARATE WAYS. YOU GO OFF AND BE ME SOMEWHERE. AND I'LL CONTINUE TO BE ME HERE.

THAT'S IT?

WHY NOT? TWO OF ME IS MORE FUN THAN ONE. YOU KNOW I LOVE THAT FRANCHISING IDEA.

WE LET THIS TRAIN BLOW UP IN GOTHAM. THAT'LL BE BEAUTIFUL. AND THEN YOU AND I NEVER HAVE TO SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN. WHAT DO YOU SAY?

AND WE'RE EQUALS? BOTH OF US GET TO BE THE JOKER?

SURE...

...UNTIL ONE OF US GETS BORED AND KILLS THE OTHER.

HA HA!

SO HOW DO WE GET OFF THIS CRAZY TRAIN?

WE JUMP.

THAT'S IT?

SIMPLE IS BEST, RIGHT?

WHEN WE GET TO THE BRIDGE WE JUST JUMP. I HAVE MEN WAITING IN A BOAT...JUST IN CASE.

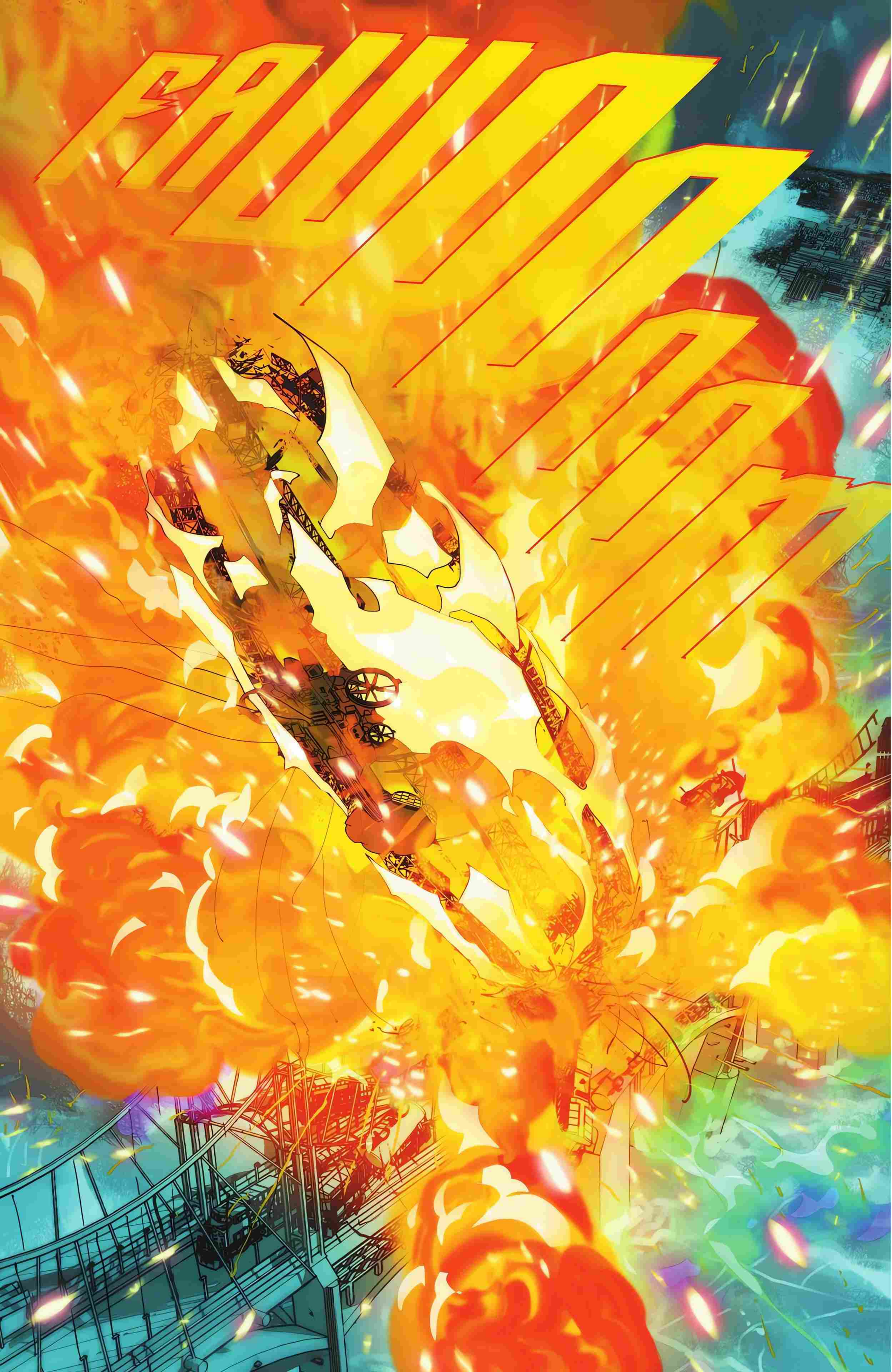
THAT'S GREAT. I HAVE SOME OF MY MEN FOLLOWING THE TRAIN IN A CAR. THEY CAN PICK US UP WHEN WE GET TO SHORE.

UMM...

COULDN'T HAVE PICKED AN EASIER ESCAPE PLAN, COULD WE?

THAT BOY REALLY, REALLY HATES YOU.

I KNOW. ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?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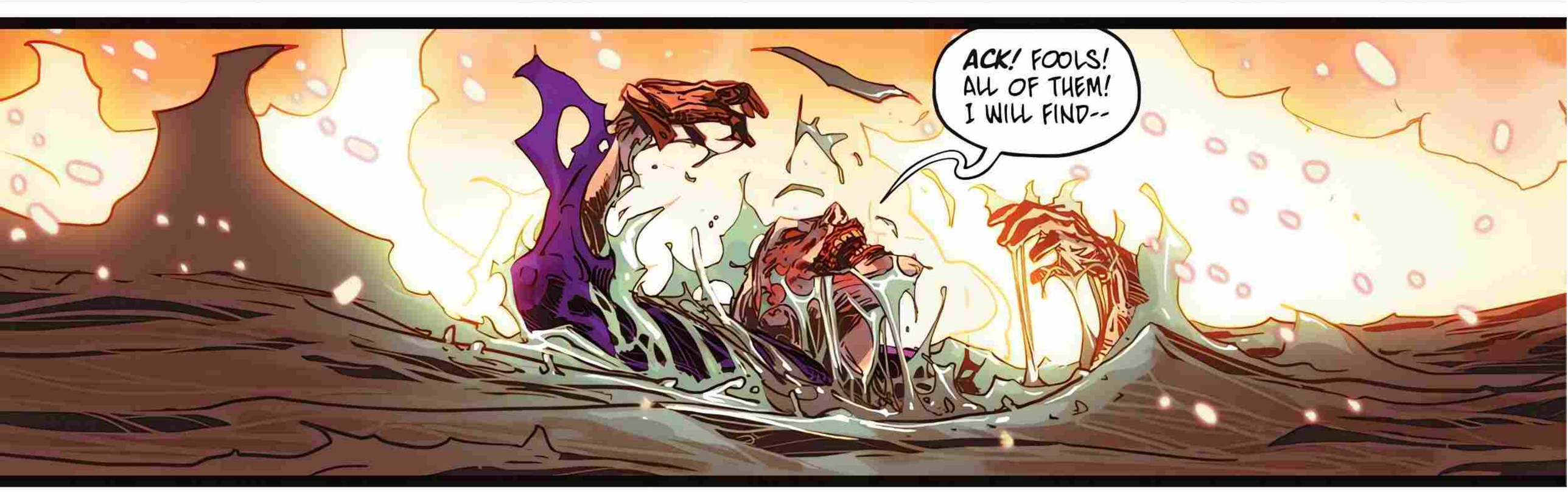
ACK! FOOLS! ALL OF THEM! I WILL FIND--
ENOUGH!

10 MINUTES LATER.

HE COULD BE ANYWHERE.

YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE. THERE STILL MIGHT BE SOME POISONOUS GAS FROM THE CRASH.

NO, NO, NO...

RAVAGER, DON'T--!

JASON, YOU STUPID IDIOT!

YOU DUMB BOY. IF YOU'RE DEAD, I SWEAR TO GOD I WILL BRING YOU BACK TO LIFE AND KILL YOU MYSELF.

COME ON, COME ON.

ABSOLUTE @#$?*€ IDIOT.

COUGH COUGH

AM I DEAD?

DESPITE YOUR BEST EFFORTS, NO. NOT YET.

HEH.

I DON'T CARE WHO YA WORK FOR. ANOTHER MOVE AND IT'S YER CORPSE THEY'RE GONNA NEED TO YANK OUTTA THIS RIVER.

SHUT THAT PUPPET UP. YOU MORONS BACKED THE FAKE AND YOU LOST. WALK AWAY NOW.

AND LEAVE WAFFLES. HE'S OUR MORON.

LOOK. NOT DEAD.

Want to know my dirty little secret? I just love the setup of a joke. All the build up and the anticipation. The questions and the confusion...

MR. JOKER? IS THAT YOU?

BACK AWAY, VENTRILOQUIST. I THINK THAT'S OUR GUY. RIGHT, BOSS?

HELLO, GENTLEMEN. THANKS FOR COMING TO PICK ME UP. LET'S ALL STOP STARING AND GET IN THE DAMNED CAR. I HAVE SO MUCH TO DO.

UMM...THAT'S GREAT AND ALL, BUT... WHICH ONE ARE YOU? AND WHERE'S THE OTHER ONE?

I never cared so much about the payoff. The happy explanations or the cathartic release of laughter.

OH, HIM? WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIM ANYMORE.

AS FOR WHO I AM...

No happy explanations. No cathartic release of laughter. Just more uncomfortable questions.

But some ***simple*** people just love a tidy ending. A clean punchline.

I'M THE JOKER.

So, if you're one of those people who can't stand the anticipation and needs everything to wrap up nicely, allow me to explain what just happened and what this whole thing was really all about...

WALTER BROUGHT HIS FRIENDS TOGETHER
AND ASKED A SIMPLE QUESTION:

“HOW DO YOU THINK THE WORLD WILL END?”

NO ONE WAS READY FOR HIS ANSWER.

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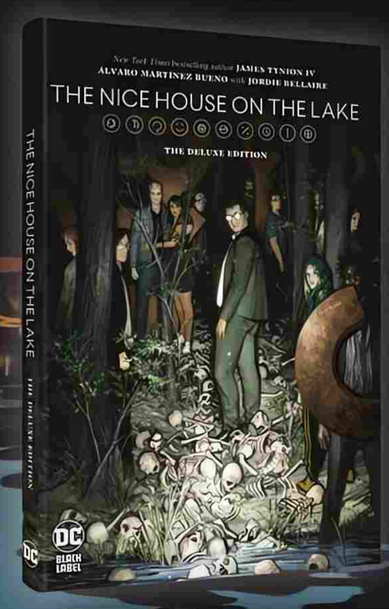
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DC NATION SPOTLIGHT ON

BATMAN OFF-WORLD

INTERVIEW WITH JASON AARON

The blockbuster creative team of writer Jason Aaron and artist Doug Mahnke unite for *Batman: Off-World*, a seven-issue epic sending Batman toward the stars. DC Nation sat down with Aaron to help uncover the burning secrets behind this series.

Batman has historically been a very grounded character, and this story sends him into deep space. What was it like taking the Dark Knight so out of his element?

Taking Batman out of his element is one of the most fun parts of this story. This is a young Batman and he's only just started to get a handle on his mission in Gotham. Then something otherworldly happens that shows Bruce how little he really knows about the universe as a whole. Now he's taking on a challenge unlike anything he's faced before.

As this story begins we find Batman aboard a spacecraft called the *War Storm*. What is this ship and who are some of the characters already on it?

The *War Storm* is a massive spaceship that acts as a mercenary training school. It goes from world to world, abducting aliens and forcing them to train as hired soldiers. Once Batman finds himself there, he meets up with Ione of Tamaran, who's a fiery stormchaser, which is like a bounty hunter in this particular sector of space, the Slag Galaxy.

What has it been like collaborating with legendary artist Doug Mahnke?

It's a total dream come true. For years now, Doug has been at the top of my "Have to Work With" list for artists. He's been absolutely nailing it on this project from page one. No surprise, but Doug draws the best-looking horde of alien killers you could ever imagine.

You've penned so many iconic runs on different superheroes—what are you specifically bringing to Batman that readers haven't seen before?

I love writing a young Batman thrown into a corner of the DCU that's wholly new to him. As a reader, it was really DC that first made me a comics fan as a kid. This project is very much an ode to some of those DC series that hooked me, like *The New Teen Titans*, *Atari Force*, and *The Dark Knight Returns*.

After many years of writing comics at other publishers, what has it been like to return to DC?

It feels great. It's a return in that Vertigo gave me one of my first big breaks in comics several years ago. But to me this *really* feels like my DC debut. You better believe that *Batman: Off-World* is just the first of many new DC projects that I'm excited to bring to life.

DON'T MISS *BATMAN: OFF-WORLD* #1, ON SALE IN NOVEMBER!

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